Tightening of visa norms by Pakistan

1159. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of recent tightening of visa norms by Pakistan;

(b) the total number of visa requests by Pakistan nationals received by Indian High Commission in Pakistan in the previous year along with the total number of visas granted.

(c) the total number of requests for visa for Pakistan, made by Indian nationals in the previous year, along with the total number of visas granted by Pakistan;

(d) whether Government are planning any change in its visa policy for Pakistan nationals; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Government have seen press reports regarding visa application procedures elaborated by Pakistan Government for Indian nationals which *inter alia* required at least eight weeks time for processing visa cases.

(b) High Commission of India, Islamabad issued 58,456 visas in 2004.

(c) This information pertains to Pakistan Government and is not available with the Government of India.

(d) and (e) Government has progressively liberalized the visa regime for Pakistani nationals. In September, 2004, Government announced liberalized visa procedures for accredited journalists, academicians, medical doctors accompanying patients, visitors for conferences approved by Government, exemption from police reporting for persons above the age of 65, increase in number of places permitted from 3 upto 12 etc. India also introduced grant of visas on arrival at Attari check-post for people above the age of 65 and below the age of 12 with effect from April 1, 2005. This facility would also be available for members of groups who have been already cleared by Government. Liberalised visa scheme for Pakistani students coming to join professional courses in recognised educational institutions and reputed international schools have been put in place.